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ABSTRACT

Compiled by a group of teachers new to the English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) field, this volume contains writing samples from teachers involved in the participatory approach to ESL classroom instruction. Introductory notes by Lee Hewitt cite the participatory approach as the most compelling method for teaching ESL adult learners. The "teaching stories" presented in this volume are as follows: "Social Issues in the Classroom" (Lucille Fandel) about housing, substance abuse prevention, and talking to social workers; "Talking about AIDS" (Kathy Brucker) about student concerns and reactions, women and AIDS, teaching issues, other issues, and AIDS information resources; "Reel to Real: Using Videos in the Participatory Classroom" (Maria E. Gonzalez); "Skits, Videos, and Conflicts" (Kathy Brucker); "Hopes, Dreams, and Memories: Making Meaning through Poetry and Stories" (Lee Hewitt); and "Using Evaluation Tools as Codes" (Kathy Brucker). (LB) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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TEACHERS' STORIES:

Expanding the Boundaries With the Participatory Approach

Lee Hewitt
Maria E. Gonzalez
Lucille Fandel
Kathy Brucker

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction
Lee Hewitt

Social Issues.....5
Lucille Fandel

Talking About AIDS.....17
Kathy Brucker

Reel To Real.....27
María E. Gonzalez

Skits, Videos, and Conflicts.....32
Kathy Brucker

Hopes, Dreams, and Memories.....37
Lee Hewitt

Evaluations.....50
Kathy Brucker

FL 800573

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We would like to express our gratitude to Elsa Auerbach who has challenged us to expand the boundaries of our teaching and to all the women who wrote *Talking Shop* whose teaching stories have shown us the incredible value of teachers talking to one another and writing it down.

Also we would like to thank all our students who are some of our greatest teachers.

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INTRODUCTION
by Lee Hewitt

We are a group of teachers relatively new to the field of ESL. We studied with each other in the graduate program of UMass and we enjoyed the challenging dialogue about teaching stimulated by our professors and other students. Some of us were finishing our studies and we wanted to remain in "dialogue" with one another. We thought that through the structure of a mini-grant we could write, talk and support one another about our teaching practices. Our goal was to do all these things and WRITE IT DOWN!

We think that teachers have a lot of wonderful stories to share about their practice. We all had our dog-earred copies of *Talking Shop* in our teaching bags. We knew from this that teaching stories could explain, inspire AND be translated into immediate classroom use. We weren't interested in writing down curriculum "recipes." We don't teach from recipes, but from the evolving dialogue that emerges from our classrooms. At least, that is what we try to do and that is one of the challenges of the Participatory Approach that brought us together.

As new ESL teachers, we all felt inspired by the possibilities of the Participatory Approach in the ESL classroom. In fact, the more we learned about language learning theory and adult learning theory the more we saw the Participatory Approach as the most compelling for ESL teaching with adult learners.

Dialogue is one of the basic tenets of the Participatory Approach, a kind of dialogue that challenges people to look at not only the content but the nature of their interchanges. As teachers, we were being invited to look at, for example, not only what kinds of questions were being asked in the classroom but who was doing the asking. We were challenged to bring the learners' worlds into the classroom, to respond and create with the learners a curriculum that responded to their language learning needs and needs as self- motivating adults with vast experiences. As Elsa Auerbach explains:

> The message is a simple one: that people learn best when the learning starts with what they already know, builds on their strengths, engages them in the learning process, and enables them to accomplish something they want to accomplish. This is the essence of the Participatory Approach.[1]

The message is a simple one, but the actual classroom practice is not. We felt challenged by the actual day to day workings of this approach, inspired and exhilarated. Teaching within this model is very demanding. However, it also provides ways to encourage students to take more responsibility for their own learning. Just as the Participatory Approach asks us to bring students' worlds into the classroom, it also sets a tone for extending the learning of the classroom into their daily lives. Students become more aware of how they learn, what their goals are and what "tools" they can use to learn what they want to know. Ideally, the tools for teaching and learning do not remain in the hands of only the teacher.

Challenges and Questions

In our conversations with one another throughout the year, we have tried to address our teaching questions and difficulties in utilizing this approach.

For example, we found ourselves constantly bumping up against the inevitable question for those of us using the Participatory Approach in our language classrooms, Where's the grammar? In fact, as relatively new teachers, we have found ourselves not only learning about what topics our students want to explore but also about their grammar issues. We shared our thoughts on such questions as: What grammar problems keep students from being able to make meaning in English? How can we help students

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1 Elsa Auerbach, Making Meaning, Making Change (Boston: University of Massachusetts, 1990).

best understand the ways to make the grammar work for them as they struggle to make themselves understood? What helps students feel "ownership" of this new language?

We find that we do use traditional tools for language teaching, however their source and purpose take on an added dimension. A grammar worksheet becomes a tool not an end in itself. A dictation becomes a way to communicate important information as well as practice listening and grammar skills. Language Experience stories presented as cloze exercises provide a context for verb work. Mini grammar lessons evolve out of class discussions and readings.

We have found very clear ways to integrate explicit grammar work into our participatory based curriculums. In our teaching stories here we have tried to highlight the language work that was involved and that evolved from the topics we were exploring in the classroom.

This approach to language is creative and demanding. It calls on the teacher to be an active listener all the time. This demand can be managed however if the teacher is clear about the goals of any particular work in the class- clear to herself and to the students. In fact, one of my students actively asked for this clarification when the class was setting class requirements and expectations at the beginning of the year. For example, she wanted to know when she was going to be "corrected" and when she wasn't. Her request helped me to be more aware of setting clear expectations for class activities and it helped me to focus my teaching energy.

Another concern that frequently comes up is the seriousness of the Participatory Approach. Why do people want to talk about problems all the time? In fact, they don't. Humor and fun are a key element in the participatory classroom. We find we use lots of games. Some games are purely language based and others are based on the topic being discussed. Games add humor and relief to the strenuous task of adult learning. They open learning doors that may be sealed by the worries and concerns of adult learners and the stresses of daily living in a new culture. In fact, one of my students requested on a mid-way evaluation that we keep playing games because they helped him to relax, forget about his problems for awhile and LEARN!

Our Dialogue

Our dialogue with each other involved the sharing of a lot of these questions, concerns, and the challenges we felt we were facing. Also we shared those wonderful moments of teaching when pedagogy and methodology blend together to create truly rich learning experiences for teacher and learner alike!

Our writing has evolved as a result of our dialogues with one another and the opportunity for sharing and reflections has, we believe, enriched our teaching. There are stories not written here that we have shared with one another over the kitchen table, the telephone, and through the mail. We want to encourage all teachers to enter into this kind of dialogue with one another.

Our stories come together here much like the many different colored and textured pieces of a patchwork quilt. We have worked together over a distance. As you will see, our pieces have different print types. They have been written on whatever word processing equipment was available to us. In many ways, it its just another way that you will hear our different "voices."

And finally we would like to thank Martha Merson of the Adult Literacy Resource Institute for her insights and technical assistance in producing this material. Her patience and support were essential.

Lee Hewitt * Maria E. Gonzalez * Lucille Fandel * Kathy Brucker

Social Issues in the Classroom

by Lucille Fandel

My aim as an ESL "teacher" is two-fold. Although I don't think that anyone really "teaches" anyone anything. (I think that we learn what we want to/need to learn and a "teacher" can either facilitate that process...or get in the way!) I do see it as my responsibility to enable participants to develop their English language skills so that they can make meaning in English. I also hope to be able to foster participants being agents of change in their own lives and in this society. The latter role I know is not shared by all ESL teachers. So for me, the above two-fold aim requires that I :

- know myself,
- know the class,
- tailor both content and method (insofar as possible) for the class,
- create or adapt materials and tailor activities according to the needs and degree of proficiency of a particular group.

My experience has shown me that participants learn faster and with greater enthusiasm when the content of the language work is the "stuff" of their lives, issues which concern them. I have also found that there is need for a kind of "continuum" of language work. For example, before participants can deal in a meaningful way with the content, they need the vocabulary and language forms which might involve less communicative practice and then hopefully to be able to move into truly communicative activities. Taking different socio-economic or political themes WHICH HAVE SURFACED FROM WITHIN THE CLASS provides for such a continuum of language work. I have done this around themes such as those shared in this publication. The process can also work the other way around. That is, participants may begin generating language more or less spontaneously (because they need to deal with a particular topic), and I may notice that they need help with certain language forms. Then I would prepare an explanation or some exercises or controlled speech to address those needs.

Moreover, the focus on a specific theme or issue allows the students to learn to build and develop their ideas and thus to actually think in English which is an important step toward fluency–beyond simple conversation. Discussions inspire an uninhibited use for language and build students confidence in their speaking abilities. Bringing in a guest to participate in a discussion/conversation around a particular topic brings out students' best English. Students often go away with a sense of accomplishment, a sense that they can converse with such people, in English, on such a topic!

One complaint I've heard from other teachers as a critique of using social issues as the content for language work is that "it's a downer to be focusing on problems all the time!" To this, I'd respond that the focus can be on achievements and how members of the class have dealt effectively with some issue. Moreover, content at other times might be of a different sort entirely. The main thing is that it comes from the participants and be relevant to their lives.

HOUSING

At the beginning of the teaching cycle I had spent some class time surfacing students' "issues," i.e. the topics around which they would like to practice their English. One student said that she would like to be able to communicate in English with her landlord. Other participants expressed enthusiasm for the same topic. The class was level two (out of four). They represented quite a mix of mastery of the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. All had rather limited vocabulary.

Preliminary Language Work

Since it was fairly early on in the cycle and we still didn't know each other very well, I started by asking the class to generate questions they would like to ask each other about their housing. I encouraged them to practice using wh- question words, which we had already practiced. They came up with the following questions which I wrote across the top of the board (so that we could later fill in the answers in chart form):

- Where do you live?
- How much rent do you pay?
- Who is your landlord?
- How many rooms in your apartment/house?
- Who are your neighbors?
- Who pays for the heat?

Next, I asked them to form small groups. Each group was to make a newsprint chart similar to the one on the board. The group members were to take turns asking each other the questions and recording the answers. I modeled the process by having someone ask me and recording my answers on the board.

When all the groups had finished we came back together and spokespersons were asked to share what was on the newsprint, taking care to use their classmates' names and to use the third person singular present tense as they spoke. There was high interest as the data came. People began to compare

situations and to ask each other more questions and to give each other advice. After class, I took the newsprints and used the data to create a cloze exercise in which each person was mentioned. They had to choose the correct verb form. We did this exercise at the start of the next class.

Following up on the cloze exercise, and still based on the class data, each participant was asked to write a short story. I gave them the first line: "We all live in Boston except Jorge." Everyone could continue on as they liked. Those who were willing shared their stories with the class.

As a review/introduction of vocabulary to do with housing, I gave them a "situation picture" of the inside of a house and asked them to work in pairs to name as many of the parts of the house and furnishings as they could. This was followed by worksheets in which participants had to write or complete sentences about the house (practicing prepositions). We also did some worksheets using "there is" and "there are" plus prepositions to write sentences about pictures of different problems in the house/apartment (a crack in the wall...roaches in the cupboards...mice in the stove) using a second situation picture.

Next we discussed: Who fixes the sink? (windows...stove...etc.). Who cleans the hall? (stairs....yard...etc). If _____ (the toilet is leaking....the lock is broken....etc.), what can you do? From there we moved on to practicing writing a note to the landlord to report something wrong with our apartment/house. This was followed by practice telephoning the landlord regarding something wrong.

Since one member of the class had to look for a new apartment and another was contemplating a move, the class decided they would like to practice using their English to rent an apartment. We started by "brainstorming" what information you need to get before you can go and check out a possible apartment:

- correct address (and directions how to get there)
- the number of bedrooms
- which utilities are included/type heat/type of building
- the up-front money requirements
- the name and telephone number of a contact person

I brought to class rental listings from various newspapers and rental magazines. The participants were asked to find apartments they'd like to look at and report back to the class.

Reading

Since we had done so much groundwork above, I decided to see if the class could manage to read a simple informational pamphlet published by the Housing Services Program of ABCD (Action For Boston Commmunity Development). Such pamphlets often contain much valuable information and my guess was that many ESL students, especially at the lower levels would not even attempt to glean anything from them. The pamphlet I chose was *Tenancy In Boston Can Be Tough...Here's Some Tips for Landlords and Tenants That Make It Easy.* It was a small, ten-page booklet with short paragraphs on different topics and attractively illustrated with graphics on every page. I made copies for all the participants and we used it as a reader over a period of a couple of weeks. I prepared questions for comprehension and language worksheets which we used after reading and discussing in class each of the main sections. It was tough going, but I would say that it was just within the reach of the students because they were so motivated–the topic was so relevant (and necessary) for them–and second because the language work leading up to the reading had prepared them well. We all felt tremendous satisfaction.

Role Plays

What follows represented a real breakthrough for some of the participants in this level two class. What was most difficult for so many of them was using their English with someone, face to face. It has been my experience that, for some students getting to a role play, somehow, helps them forget themselves and their English starts to flow. This is what happened.

By way of preparation for the role plays we brainstormed:

A. What questions would we want to ask the landlord?
   - Who does the maintenance on the the apartment?
   - Was the building tested for lead paint?
   - What is the estimated monthly cost of utilities?
   - Are you willing to do repairs if it doesn't pass inspection for a "Section 8" (government rent subsidy)?
   - When will a decision be made about renting it or not?

B. What do you want to say to the landlord to "sell" yourself as a tenant?

- For someone with a "section 8": The rent will be guaranteed and that there will be compensation for any damages which might occur.
- For any of us: We work,... are in school,...are good parents,...good housekeepers...etc.

C. Questions the landlord might ask you. What can you say if (s)he asks/says:

- Do you have a job?
- When can you move in?
- How much money can you pay up front and how soon?
- Is anyone else going to live with you?
- How long do you plan on living here?
- Do you have any pets?
- Do you have a good credit history?
- Who takes care of your children?
- What is your income per month?
- Tell me a little about yourself?
- Is there anything you want to ask me?

We all shared our ideas about how we could answer these questions. We talked about which of possible answers would give the landlord a positive impression of us.

Then volunteers took turns getting up to be landlord and prospective tenant. The scenario agreed upon involved talking to the landlord about possibly renting the apartment. As I said above, it went well and a number of the participants surprised the class with the amount of English used. Then it was Margarita's turn, a woman who had shared with the class how many problems she had with her own landlord. So many things in her apartment were substandard, but he refused to do anything about them. Margarita got up and, to the astonishment of the other student playing the part of the landlord who was merely trying to rent the apartment, began telling the landlord off-in English! She began cataloguing all that was wrong and how many times she's told him and how he'd done nothing. It was such an amazing and impressive "performance" that the whole class cheered when she finished!

As Margarita was one of the class with more limited speaking skills this was a real breakthrough for her in terms of her language. Psychologically

it also appears to have been a breakthrough. Not long after Margarita reported to the class that she had finally taken one of the actions we had read about in the ABCD Booklet (above). She had arranged to withhold her rent and to put it into an escrow account until the apartment was properly renovated. Before that cycle ended the landlord had begun work on the apartment.

Conversation with a Housing Advocate

It has been my experience that inviting a visitor to class to have a conversation with the group calls forth everyone's best English. As a sort of culmination of this unit on housing I invited a friend who is a housing advocate at a local family shelter. She had developed a housing game which she used with women in the shelter to help them learn what they needed to know to secure their rights as tenants. The game takes a problem-solving approach. It consists of a series of questions or problems with which any tenant might find him/herself faced. (There is also a game board and pieces to be moved around the board as one successfully solves the problem.) We used the game as a stimulus for a discussion in which participants would first offer their solutions to any particular problem. Their solutions were then commented upon or expanded upon (or corrected) by the housing advocate based on her wide knowledge and experience.

The conversation flowed, in English, for an hour and a half with high energy and interest. Again, participants were amazed at themselves and the amount of English they had used. The class was rated as the best of the whole cycle!

SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION

The issue of substance abuse is one that has surfaced repeatedly within the ESL classes of the Center in recent years. Last year, when participants were asked for their choice of topics for workshops, substance abuse and AIDS prevention were again raised. All of the teachers of all the different levels agreed to prepare classes concerning the issue of the abuse of alcohol and other drugs (just as they might deal with other issues such as housing, health, work). Our focus was to be the PREVENTION of substance abuse.

So as to not just drop this topic on new classes, the idea was introduced to all participants at the orientation session for the new cycle. During the

first week of classes students were also asked to respond to a questionnaire (in Spanish for the lower levels and in English for the upper levels) in which they were asked if they thought that HABLE program should include language practice. These preliminary questionnaires, although they included some dissenting opinions, overwhelmingly verified student interest. The same questionnaire was also used to identify specific areas of interest within such a wide topic and to identify resources among the students. For example, some students had personal experiences as drug counselors or community activists back in their own countries. The expertise of those participants was later drawn upon.

The approach used in each classs varied according to the teacher and students. However, PREVENTION is often broken down to include the four strategies of information, skills building, alternatives and social policy. Among the teachers, we agreed that over the course of the year's four cycles we would give emphasis to one strategy each cycle. What follows is what I did with the highest level ESL class- level five.

We began by all taking a pre-test of our knowledge about drugs. As we corrected our answers we talked about some of the facts and about our misconceptions. These pre-tests were testimony to the fact that we could all do with learning a bit more on the topic.

Since I still wasn't sure about what aspect of this vast topic was most relevant to the group, I decided to break into it by asking the class to write some sociodramas capturing some aspect of the drug problem. I figured that they would come up with some aspect which touched them most closely or at least was of interest to them, personally. So, I asked them to form four small groups and to come up with:

- the setting
- the characters (names, a description of each)
- the problem
- the dialogue
- a set of questions which could be used to lead the classs in discussing the sociodrama, to discuss the problem

The four skits which resulted dealt with:

- peer pressure among teenagers (2 skits)
- drug dealers in the family
- the response of community leaders to the problem

During the following week, students presented their skits to the whole class and they also took turns leading the class discusssions. For my part, I

examined the sociodramas for the language they contained and assigned relevant language exercises. For example, the first skit on "Peer Pressure" was followed up by a writing assignment in which they were asked to practice the conditionals "would", "should", and "could" to talk about their response as if they were the parents of the teenagers in the skit. There was also a reading of a booklet on peer pressure from which these higher level students gained a lot of colloquial vocabulary.

The second sociodrama on peer pressure was followed-up with a video for lots of listening practice. The video was on "*Choices and Consequences,*" which is available from the Prevention Center at the Medical Foundation, Boston. It portrayed the different responses a range of parents of teenagers with drug problems had. This was followed by lively discussion and debate.

The other two sociodramas were followed not only by additional readings (an overview of different drugs, on co-dependence, etc.) but with a process-writing assignment. Students were encouraged to express their views on some aspect of the issue, from any perspective they wished. These pieces were drafted, shared with others, reworked and later edited. The final drafts were shared, some of them, with students in other classses within the program and in other programs in the hopes of getting a dialogue going among students. As of the end of the cycle, unfortunately, no responses had yet been received. Another idea for fostering such a dialogue was to have students enter the pieces they'd written through the computer modum where they would be accessible to other students in other programs in a kind of forum. Unfortunately, the cycle was over before we were able to realize this. The writing pieces which came out of the above ranged in focus from the personal to the international.

As I have said elsewhere in this publication, one of the best ways to get students to put on their best English is to invite a visitor into the class for a conversation. This time we invited someone from the Boston Public Schools "Drug Free Schools" program. She came with a game called 'Talk, Listen, and Care." It is aimed at fostering dialogue between parents and children around sensitive issues such as substance abuse. Different questions are raised and all around the table express their views on that topic (or pass, if they wish) with no judgment of the "rightness" or "wrongness" of the opinion. It gave us all a chance to know what each other thought of the opinion. It gave us all a chance to know what others thought on so many different topics and we had a conversation in English for two hours running! The participants' enthusiasm was indicated by the

fact that all but two in the class reported the next day that they had played the game (each had been given their own copy) at home that same evening.

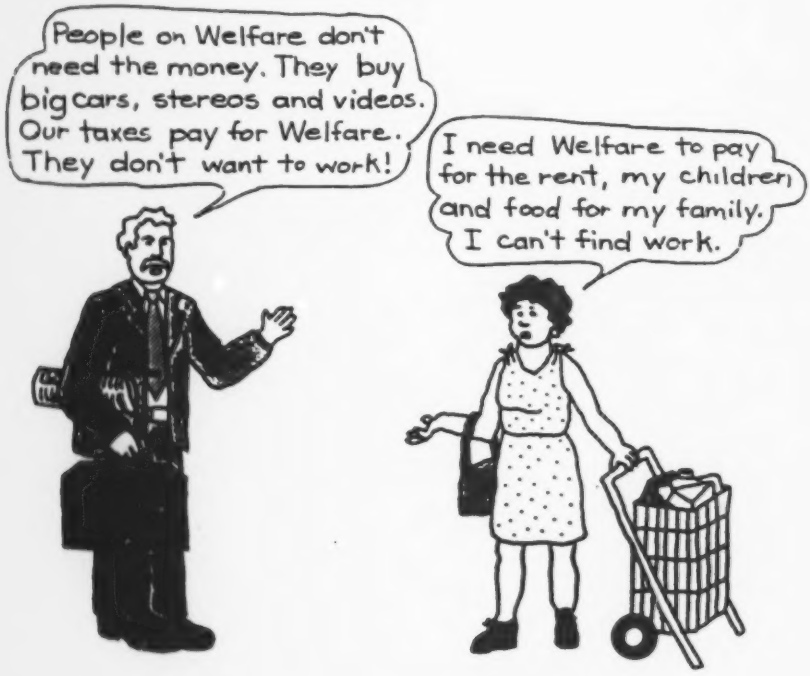
TALKING TO A SOCIAL WORKER

Since many of the participants in this particular class had to relate to a social worker in one way or another it was decided that we would practice using English with a social worker. I took a similar approach, as with housing, that is, by providing classroom time to practice the language with which to address the issue, in reading, discussion, writing, role plays, and finally, with a guest speaker: a social worker who came to class for a conversation.

We began with an exercise in problem-posing using the "code" below. By this, I mean we used the picture with its exchange between Adam Smith and Irene de Silva to see:

- what was happening in the exchange.
- why it was happening
- similarity to our own experiences
- what we could do about it

We talked about what Adam Smith could have said and what Irene de Silva could say.


People on Welfare don't need the money. They buy big cars, stereos and videos. Our taxes pay for Welfare. They don't want to work!
I need Welfare to pay for the rent, my children and food for my family. I can't find work.

Adam Smith Irene de Silva

from INPRINT by Long and Spiegel-Podnecky Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. 1988

Next we read a reprint of an Ann Landers column which was on the topic of welfare. After each person had some time to read the column by his/herself we read it together and discussed how we would have responded to the welfare mom.

Ann Landers
Welfare Mom Stuck in Catch 22

Dear Ann Landers:

I read a letter in your column recently from a woman who was caught in the welfare trap. I am in the same fix and can't figure a way out.

I have three small children, all conceived in marriage. Their father refuses to pay the child support ordered by the court. He lives with a girlfriend who works while he babysits her kids. She receives child support from her ex-husband and makes a good salary.

I feel that this woman is cheating my kids out of clothing, shoes, and nourishing food because if my ex goes to work she loses her babysitter. So she supports him while the government supports his kids.

He brags about his fancy stereo equipment and a vacation condo they bought six months ago. When I asked him to buy a box of diapers for the baby (to be used during his visiting time) he refused.

We are lucky to be in a decent low-income apartment. This makes it possible for us to pay our bills and eat but my children go without so many things they need because I don't have a spare dime.

I have a high school education and can type 50 words a minute, but the wages for mediocre typists are so low that I would end up paying my salary to a day-care provider.

Also, if I go to work my rent goes up, my food stamps go down, I lose Medicaid, and I'd be much worse off financially. Also, I would not be able to spend time with my children, as I do now.

I talked to my caseworker and she flat out told me to forget about a job because I was much better off staying on welfare. When I asked about government help for further education, she said there are no funds in our country to pay for child care while I attend classes and I'd better forget about that, too. It's frustrating and degrading to be on welfare. When you meet decent man and he finds out you're on welfare, he thinks you are a moocher or too lazy to go to work.

Are there any congressmen out there who are interested in hearing from those of us who sincerely want to get off welfare and be self-supporting?

--S.C., Grand Junction, Colo.

We also read and discussed the article from La Semana "State Study Finds Newcomers Give More Than They Get" (June 14-20,1990). The final

reading was the pamphlet published by the Massachusetts Department of Public Welfare "When I Go To Work."

By way of preparation for the visit of the Social worker to our class, we brainstormed ideals for how we would like to use our time with her. It was decided that we would prepare two or three role plays to be presented for her when she came and which could be discussed with her. Each role play was to "encode" some dilemma involving a client and a social worker. The plan was to present the role play, have our class offer our opinions on what should be done in that case and then hear from the social worker what she would have done in that situation.

In fact, we surfaced enough dilemmas for about ten role plays. Three were chosen and prepared. After the presentation the audience gave their feedback to the actors. My questions were:

- Was the problem solved in the role play?
- Did an audience member have a better solution?
- What did the audience observe about the players' English?

We practiced this in class, but on the given day when the social worker came some of the key actors were absent. We ended up in a conversation much like the one at the end of the HOUSING unit. We used the ten dilemmas one by one. Participants offered solutions to each problem and then the social worker commented or supplemented what we had been able to offer.

In this way, participants were engaged for more than an hour in a lively conversation in English and much valuable information was also gained. More than one student reported later in the year having plucked up the courage to try to use only English with their social worker and, in each case, they had met with affirmation and encouragement.

The ten dilemmas (or problems) we discussed were:

- You are on welfare. You want to work. Will welfare pay for childcare?
- Can an undocumented person apply for welfare?
- The social worker wants you to come for another appointment. You don't think you need another appointment. What can you do?
- You had $275 worth of food stamps. The welfare office cut your food stamps to $47. What can you do?
- You had an appointment at the social service office. You missed your appointment. The social worker says you must wait a month for another appointment. What can you do?

- You changed your address. You want to notify the social services office. What should you do?
- You want to apply for General Relief. What must you do? What documentation do you need?
- How can you get a voucher for day care?
- Where does General Relief money come from? Does it come from Social Security?
- You receive a letter which tells you your case is closed. You have 30 days for an appeal. What can you do?

TALKING ABOUT AIDS

Kathy Brucker

I always start a cycle by asking students where they'd like to be able to use English. We come up with a predictable list of places like at the doctor's, with neighbors, in stores and banks, etc. From these situations arises talk about different topics especially contemporary problems. Inevitably we talk about social issues such as children and schools, drugs, alcohol, racism, AIDS, and in my experience, its usual companion, homosexuality. Social problems have provided a good stage for me to find out about student's language and what areas they need more practice in and what they're ready to learn. These topics provide fertile ground to start discussions, guide arguments, provide real-life readings, and promote opinion writing.

I've discussed AIDS with three mixed classes (men and women) ranging from intermediate to low level ESL, mostly with Spanish speaking people.

Getting Started

I have a basic format that I've set up to frame this subject . (I use this format to talk about alcohol and drugs also.) We start with a question period where people brainstorm what they have always wanted to know about HIV and AIDS. Some examples of questions from students are:

- What is the meaning of AIDS?
- How is it contagious?
- Where was AIDS born?
- How can I know if I have AIDS?
- If I had a test five year ago is possible have AIDS now?

After discussion it usually turns out that there are some students who know someone who is HIV positive, has AIDS or has died from complications of AIDS. Of course, we share knowledge.

From the very beginning I try to draw out the difference between HIV and AIDS. I help translate common AIDS vocabulary like condoms, needles, AZT, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, vaginal fluids, yeast infections, IV drug users, HIV positive, HIV negative, fetus, drugs, and sexually transmitted diseases from the discussions.

I keep a pile of literature around about AIDS in English and Spanish. I get these materials from Concilio Hispano (the agency I work for now) and the Aids Action Committee. In the places I've taught we've used a big table to sit and learn around. I've used this set-up to keep brochures and pamphlets

handy for students to browse through or take. I pull them out every day and keep them on the table through our class periods. Keeping access to the AIDS materials enables people to read the facts and warnings again from another source plus share them with people, have some relevant reading materials in English to read in their leisure time, and get information they may be afraid or too embarrassed to ask about.

I've found that I have to be careful because I can get carried away in preparing work for this subject and wanting to spend a lot of time on it. AIDS work is a major part of my personal life. Group work helps me to stay detached and really listen to people. It enables me to be a moderator not a contributor. I can address concerns and questions and not be tapped into my personal agenda.

Student Concerns and Reactions

Most of my students are women and mothers. Because of this fact I feel that it is important to state and emphasize the fact that heterosexual women's risk of contracting this disease are rapidly increasing. I used the article "Johnson Retires Due to AIDS Virus" from November 1991 *News For You* as a way in. Magic Johnson was a good way in which to discuss which groups HIV are hitting. I heard a lot of talk from students about Johnson and his HIV status before class and during breaks. People (women and men) seemed to feel more personally affected by Johnson because although he is famous (which could be alienating) he's heterosexual and supposably got the HIV virus from a woman. He's also rumored to be a "nice, normal guy."

After we read the article I listened to student questions and comments. Most expressed amazement that heterosexual people could get AIDS. People also wondered why there aren't any cures. I followed my internal agenda and focused on asking questions around which groups of people this disease is hitting. The answers to the questions were predictable to me and soon became apparent. We realized that it's hit groups who aren't important to mainstream society (Gays and Lesbians, Blacks, Latinos, IV drug users, etc.). Then I showed a chart which portrays IV drug users and heterosexual women as the groups with the highest rates of HIV infection. The chart encouraged quite a bit of discussion and disbelief. No one could understand the causes for this. People didn't believe that women are dying so fast from AIDS . They couldn't understand how so many women could die when they are "only" raising a family and married.

To encourage questions and discussion around this societal problem I asked, "Who usually stays with the children when couples separate? When you and your kids are sick who takes care of everyone? Who goes to the doctor first? Who's sick the longest?" "Women", were the answers. From this answer and further discussion we come to the conclusion that women are usually the caretakers and in turn we don't take care of ourselves. Part of this is not valuing ourselves, which is another societal problem

I also started a discussion to encourage people to see the connection between IV drug user's, needles and HIV infection. We talked about many women's dependency on others and how that can lead us into deadly situations. Many women are infected by their drug-using partner either because they use drugs which their partners start them on and/or through intercourse.

This leads to a discussion about the reality of what could happen when husbands practice non-monagamy without safe sex in these times. This is a cultural issue and one we generally haven't gotten into beyond anecdotes. During times like this I need to remember that I'm a white, middle-class American, and I can present my opinions but not impose them. Students tend to have lively conversations about this issue and I just listen making English corrections, when necessary for understanding.

Finally one of the students talked to her friend who does HIV education work among Latinas. The friend told her that my statistics were true and repeated the reasons (which are explored below). People were satisfied with this. When I talk about these issues students look at me as if to say you're a teacher not an AIDS, housing, drug and alcohol etc. educator. That's why it's been important for me to have outside resources come in. I've found having literature in English and Spanish around helpful, also.

Another sensitive area we've talked about is how to protect ourselves or safe sex. Part of this is feeling you're worth protecting which, as women, we usually don't. I've found that many women stand by the argument that they need to be protected so that their children won't be orphaned.

<u>Women and AIDS</u>

Women are dying faster than other populations after being diagnosed with HIV. We are constantly underdiagnosed. This means that many women are dying of HIV complications without being officially recognized as "people with AIDS" first. The CDC (Center for Disease Control) hasn't

expanded their definition of AIDS to include the gynecological, life-threatening problems that women usually present when they finally do go to the doctor. When women are finally tested for HIV they are very sick, need more intense treatments which aren't always available for women and die sooner.

Teaching Issues (Trying to stay on track)

We get on lots of sidetracks while discussing this subject. The decision to pursue them, in English, is up to the class. If the majority votes to continue to discuss them or if the majority is eagerly contributing to the discussion then we continue. If the majority doesn't want to be involved or I can see side conversations are happening and people aren't participating, I stop the class and ask for a vote on which way to continue.

One common sidetrack is talking about how our government pays for drugs to come into the country. Discussions concerning drug growing and trading in people's countries, what this means for the people who live there and the economy take place.

The issue of homosexuality always comes up. I encourage people to voice opinions which usually turn out to be stereotypes. I continue by asking people to define stereotypes. We discuss and list our stereotypes of Latinos, Blacks, Whites, Chinese etc. Usually, through discussion the fact comes out that we are generalizing and know people in these categories who aren't like the stereotypes.

This conversation allows me a way to tell people that my father died of AIDS. After people ask me how he got sick I reply, "From his male lover of eight years." I normally share a lot of information about my life with students just as they share a lot with me. I share this information for that reason as well as to emphasize the fact that gay people are the same as "normal" people. My father led a quiet, relatively conventional life, had a family, loved, lived , studied, visited and worked in the same places as many students do. Making it personal, in my experience, encourages thoughtful questions and discourages anti-gay comments. By the time we talk about this I know my students and I know who's homophobic and who are more open-minded. I explain that I will take all comments and questions in the spirit of students wanting to learn and not be offended. I do tell people when I think that they're being deogatory and more polite ways to say things.

Some students are acquainted with gays and lesbians in this country. They are helpful in personalizing the issue and saying, "Hey, gay people are people, too. You'd be surprised who's gay." I have been lucky to have compassionate people in my class who have seen hard times and been affected by people with AIDS so we can talk about it as a social justice issue not as a moral issue and how people should live or how they are being punished for their sins. Again, I have my own agenda in this area which I work at being flexible in following but there are certain facts I like to emphasize so that people realize that they can be exposed to AIDS.

As far as talking about my dad, I suppose that in any subject you can be revealing but for me this is an emotional issue. I need to know well the people in my class before I talk about my father or AIDS.

I still frequently hear the comment, "There aren't any gay people in our country!" to which I and others reply, "You don't know that! You never know who's gay."

All of these subjects provide rich materials for relevant English practice in all the skill areas and support the role of critical thinking to promote learning.

Issues That Come Up Around AIDS

Students ask about how much money is being put into research and medicines. I connect this to who the disease is infecting which we talk about first and then they realize the answer. Gays, IV drug users, women, and minorities are the reason there isn't much money spent on research , trials, and development of cheap, obtainable drugs.

Breast cancer is comparable in relation to these facts. The government doesn't spend money on research for us, and what these facts are doing to the women's community. From different material that I've obtained (again through AIDS Action, Concilio, and ACT UP/BOSTON) we realize that the number of infected gay men has decreased, and we discuss the correlation between becoming politically involved and inciting government action. We end up discussing how to educate people and children, and what we can do to stop this plague. Of course, this leads into discussions about what the Latino and other communities are doing to end this "quiet genocide".

Grammar Work

Grammar work can center around writing or translating from taped true life stories. From these I or groups of students make up cloze exercises, different types of questions, and verb work. Opinion writing can be hot and bring excitement to writing. You can use editorial cartoons or discussion questions from yourself or the class. Elizabeth St. John, another ESL teacher at Concillio did this. Examples of her work are footnoted at the end of this article.

With a higher level class we wrote questions that students said they wanted to ask in the community and with their families. I made up a chart based on a chart which asked people how they found their jobs in Elsa Auerbach's book "ESL In The Workplace". We changed it to suit our purposes.

AIDS

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Have you ever:			
1. taken drugs?			
2. smoked pot?			
3. injected drugs?			
4. drunk every day?			
5. drunk to relax?			
6. drunk by yourself?			
7. had sex with different people?			
8. used a condom when you had sex ?			
9. shared needles for drug use?			

By the time we finished they were afraid to carry it out. They said people might get angry with them for being nosey and maybe even beat them up. It was good practice of the present perfect tense, though! They ended up practicing with each other which was a learning experience.

Through time I've found that students love dictations. I utilize this interest by dictating facts and statistics that deal with current subjects of interest (AIDS, alcohol, drugs, breast cancer, families etc). I dictate facts then hand out the written facts (which I've collected and written) so that people

can check their listening and spelling skills. After these I have questions on the papers for people to discuss in small groups.

During math classes with these same students, I use articles to practice finding facts and then we create different kinds of charts with questions. Sometimes we divide into groups to work on different articles and charts. Groups trade their charts and answer the questions using information from the charts that people have created.

Ending

I try to end with a quiz. I say try because sometimes this subject gets too heavy for people and they want to change to a lighter subject. Depending on interest at another point in the cycle I or one of the students may bring it up again. We discuss it or drop it depending on class concensus.

I base the quiz on the questions we came up with when we brainstormed at the beginning. I use the same questions people asked at the beginning to check out how much people learned, if attitudes changed, and if people want to continue to talk about this. This method encourages peer teaching and questioning. We do the quiz individually, then as a group. I got this idea from Mujures Unidas AIDS curriculum.

I always end by inviting a speaker in to talk about HIV and AIDS. This gives students an opportunity to listen to someone else's English, get more facts, confirm facts we talked about, and ask the questions we worked on in the beginning. The speakers have games to practice using condoms and helping people find answers to men's perpetual complaint, "But I'm too big for a condom!!"

Aids Action and Waltham Health Center recommend not mixing groups when talking about this subject. Many of us don't have that luxury but I would say that it is good for a man and woman to be the speakers, if possible. The day the woman speaker came to our class the two men in my class were (conveniently) absent. The women did seem to open up more as far as asking questions and venturing opinions. This way groups can separate to talk privately and later come together to hear the other sexes point of view. It would depend on the classes' decision.

Reflections

I would like to get more student writings and reflections to use as reading materials . I have used stories done in LEA method as readings and discussions starters.

I would like to develop role plays with students around educating others, especially children. Students have made up simple role plays in groups around how to talk to teenagers about AIDS. They want to be sure that they're taking precautions with themselves.

Talking about social issues can be both empowering and overwhelming. Because talk about sex can get really emotional and embarrassing for people, I try to present it objectively and casually so that people will talk, listen and not turn off. In my experiences I've found that students feel in control when we use common AIDS expressions and vocabulary that they hear on the street and ask about in class. As terms or questions come up we discuss them and I write them on newsprint. I hang this on the walls so that students remember and feel comfortable using the terms. This is encouraging for all students because they can go out, hear the same words and then use them in the community.

Using real materials is very important in the ESL classroom. Students are exposed to literature that is familiar. They see it in waiting rooms, beauty salons, and other frequently visited places. These kinds of ads are also in newspapers and on bulletin boards. This literature serves as a connector to American culture, values, and language. People in my classes have told me that through discussing and handling these materials in the classroom they lose the intimidation they feel at seeing them in the "real world."

I see and hear an immediate effect from our discussion about AIDS and AIDS prevention. Students have told me and I have overheard them tell others that they talk to their partners, children and other important people in their lives about AIDS and what they've learned in class.

AIDS must be openly discussed among all people from all backgrounds because it's affecting everyone, directly or indirectly, and will not be hindered until people are educated and aren't afraid to share their knowledge.

Resources and Materials

AIDS Action Committee
Educational Materials
131 Clarendon St.
Boston, MA 02116
(617)437-6200, ext. 234

AIDS Information Hotlines
800-342-2437 English
800-232-7725 Portuguese
800-3440-7432 Spanish
800-243-7889 TDD

American Red Cross

Center For Disease Control 800-458-5231

Mass. AIDS Action Hotline 800-235-2331

Mass. Drug and Alcohol Line
800-327-5050 (24 Hours)
800-445-1500
617-547-2100 TDD

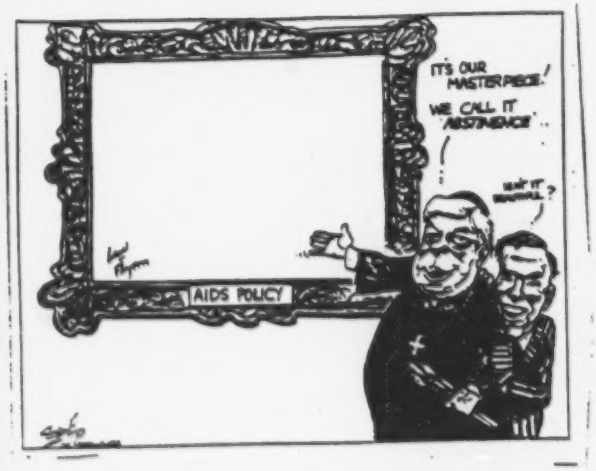
Mount Auburn Hospital : Prevention And Training Center
24 Crescent St., Suite 301
Waltham, MA. 02154
893-0111

Mujures Unidas En Accion, Inc.: Curriculum For AIDS Awareness
1524 Dorchester Ave.
Dorchester, MA. 02122
265-3015

National AIDS Information Clearinghouse
800-458-5231

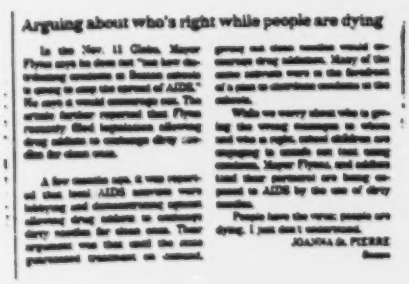
Medical Foundation: Prevention Center Library
Berkely St.
Boston, MA.
451-0049 (Make appointment with Stacey Chisolm to use the materials.)

Elizabeth St. John, another ESL teacher at Concilio, used a rewritten version of the Magic Johnson article from News For You, editorial cartoons and letters to the editor from the Globe to develop her materials on HIV and AIDS. Examples of these are included below.
These were very effective in stimulating discussions and writings from her low-level students.



Cardinal Law is the highest authority in the Catholic church in Boston.
Ray Flynn is the mayor of Boston.

They recommend abstinence from sex as the way to stop AIDS from spreading.
What do you think?



Arguing about who's right while people are dying

In the Nov. 11 Globe, Mayor Flynn says he does not "see how discriminating comments in Boston schools is going to stop the spread of AIDS." He says it would encourage sex. The article further reported that Flynn recently filed legislation allowing drug addicts to exchange drug needles for clean ones.

A few months ago, it was reported that local AIDS activists were lobbying and demonstrating against allowing drug addicts to exchange dirty needles for clean ones. Their opposition was that until the most permanent treatment or control, [illegible] would encourage drug addiction. Many of the same activists were in the forefront of a case to distribute condoms in the schools.

While we worry about who is going the wrong messages to whom and who is right, school children are engaging in suicide, are [illegible], Mayor Flynn, and activists [illegible] their parents are being exposed to AIDS by the use of dirty needles.

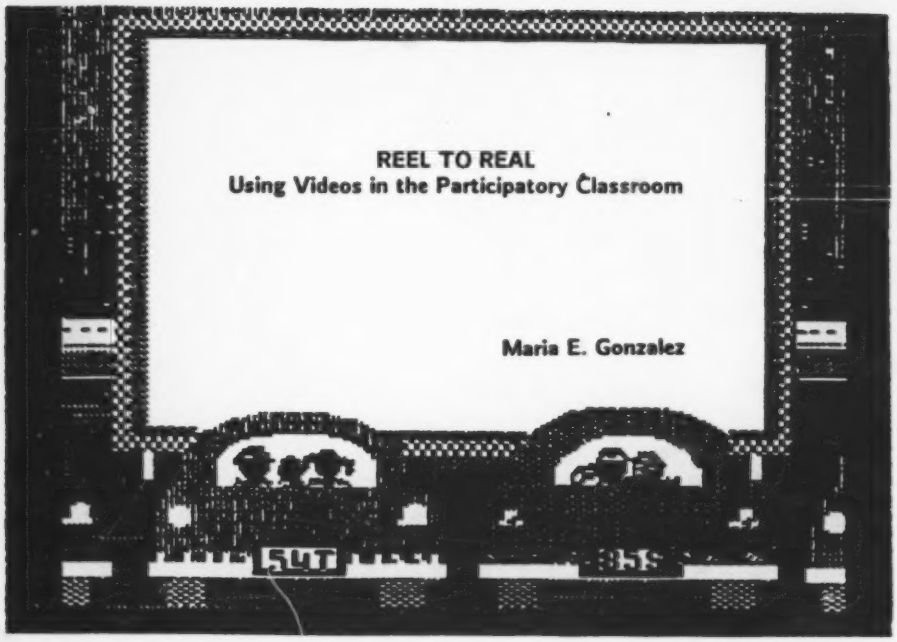
People have the virus; people are dying. I just don't understand.

JOANNA M. PIERRE
Boston

Many people who have AIDS now got it from sharing needles (to inject drugs) with people who have AIDS. (Or, from having sexual relations with people who use drugs who have AIDS.)

Some people think drug addicts should be allowed to exchange their dirty needles for clean, new ones. They feel this would help prevent the spread of AIDS.

What do you think?



The first time I used video in the classroom, I was a new teacher looking for ways to make the curriculum more meaningful for the learners and for myself. I was teaching a multi-level, multi-lingual ESL class in a downtown hotel. This program was part of a citywide workplace initiative and a "specialist" had chosen the textbooks for all of the worksites. I thought that if I could find a film that was both about work and about being an immigrant, I could justify a departure from the mandated curriculum.

Finding a film that fit my criteria was harder than I thought. Even though it's generally accepted that the United States is a country made up of immigrants, there is a dearth of films that deal with the immigrant experience, or with work-related issues for that matter. So I became a very regular customer of my neighborhood's video store, checking out any film that I thought could possibly be relevant. I finally just concentrated on "work" films, since there seemed to be more of those available. Films like **Norma Rae, Silkwood, 9 to 5,** and **Blue Collar.** However, most of my students had never worked in a factory, weren't office workers and hadn't dealt with unions. In retrospect, now that I have more experience using videos as a teaching tool, I think I would be more apt to use at least parts of any of those films as catalysts for generating content in the classroom.

I continued my search and found out that a film I had seen in the theater about a year earlier had just come out as a video and as soon as I reviewed it, I knew I had found just what I was looking for. **Living on Tokyo Time** was made on a string budget by a young, Japanese-American filmmaker from the West Coast, Steven Okazaki. The story is about a young Japanese woman who immigrates

to the United States to learn English and "to have an American experience." She works as a dishwaster in a restaurant and studies English at night. The main story line of the film centers around the issue of how Kioko, the protagonist, marries a Japanese-American in order to obtain a "green card." Other themes of the film are culture shock, assimilation, married life, expectations about the U.S., and love. The style of the film makes it every accessible because the story takes place in a contemporary setting with a lot of catchy, West-Coast style music. Many of the sequences are purely visual, as opposed to being filled with dialogue. The film also fulfilled my criteria for workplace themes in that it shows the protagonists working at jobs that the learners in my class did themselves: Kioko is a dishwasher in a restaurant and her husband is a Maintenance Worker in a warehouse. It also shows Kioko performing a lot of household type of tasks which the Room Attendants (new name for Maids) did every day as part of their jobs.

At the time, I was not familiar with the participatory approach so I put in many hours preparing a "curriculum" for the video. I spent a long time watching the film and making notes, including lists of idiomatic language and a lot of comprehension questions. But in the actual showing, I found that my viewing guide was just that, **my viewing guide,** and that the students reacted to the parts of the film that spoke to their interest and experience. The guide was useful in that I had anticipated reaction to some themes plus it gave me a certain amount of inner security - the "I'm prepared" feeling. Now that I'm more familiar with showing videos and the practice of working with an emerging curriculum I find that it's not necessary nor even useful to "over-prepare". For example, in my first guide for **Living on Tokyo Time** I had a very extensive list of the many idioms used in the film. I perceived them as a "problem" and thought that if I went over all of them before each segment, they would make better sense. But I found out quickly that you can't really discuss idioms out of context and that it's better in the multi-level ESL classroom to present idiomatic language as an integral part of real language. In other words, exposure to idioms in everyday speech is more useful than "studying" them and learners will ask about particular ones once they are ready to learn about them.

It is useful to prepare for a video in the classroom using some general guidelines, similar as to what you would do if you were presenting a piece of writing or any other material. It is actually essential, in my experience, to present a video as a piece of literature, full of visual and spoken metaphors, artistry, and themes for analysis and discussion. This is important because most of us have grown up with television and movies as entertainment. Learners have too and sometimes a student who is willing to work hard in the classroom with a more conventional piece of writing will not think it's necessary to put as much effort in an assignment that's related to a video. A good way to set the tone

is not to show a video in the dark and to have "Viewing with a Purpose" activities while learners are watching. This can be listening for certain information such as idioms, greetings, modals, etc.

Other general guidelines are to break up the film into segments that make sense. When I first showed **Living on Tokyo Time** each segment was about 12 minutes long but I found it more helpful to show the first and second segments together so as to "hook" the students into the plot. I was able to test the effects of doing it both ways because the first day I only had time to show the first two segments to one third of the class and found that people were not as enthusiastic as I hoped they would be. So, in the next class I showed segments one and two together for a total of approximately 24 minutes and people got more into it, even those who had not been present the first day. I have noticed that television stations do this - they show the first 15 to 20 minutes of a film without commercial interruptions.

So, where's the participatory in all of this, you might be asking yourself? Not everything that I do in the classroom with a video relates to the participatory approach but the effect it has is very learner-centered. Films are "moving pictures" and as such they make great "codes" or catalysts for "problem-posing". Although it's true that an entire film may offer too many themes, I have found the five-part schema for questions developed by the participatory approach a valuable tool to decode entire films. The following is my adaptation of that inductive questioning process. I have reduced it to only four steps since showing a whole film usually requires a lot of discussion about what's going on in the screen during viewing.

General:

I. What is/are the problem(s); How do the characters (name) feel about it; What do they about it?

II. Have you had a similar problem/situation?
What happens in your country about this situation?

III. Why does this happen? What are the reasons for these problems/situations?

IV. What can be done about them? What are the choices?

In a class where I showed **Living on Tokyo Time**, the theme of immigration had dominated discussion during the viewing of the film. So I facilitated more discussion after watching the film by directly focusing on that theme with the following questions:

I. Why can't Kioko stay in the U.S.? How does she feel about it?

What does she do about it?

II. Did you have a similar problem with Immigration? What did you do about it?

III. What are some reasons people from all over the world come to the U.S.? Did you have similar reasons for coming here?

IV. Are there solutions to the problems in some countries that make people have to leave? What can be done?

When we got to No. III, the learners brainstormed on the first part of the question and I wrote their comments on the board. I then drew a line underneath and started to record their individual reasons for coming to the U.S. Whenever someone said "for a better life" I tried to get them to be more specific.

REASONS PEOPLE COME TO THE U.S.

To study
A good job
Enough money to live
Enough money to send back home
To escape war
To study English
To see the United States
To make a lot of money
To have freedom
To have democracy

Marcelino	Elvira	Vladimir	Marie	Ngo Lin
To study	Join sister	Have freedom	To work	To work
To make $'s	Get marry	See U.S.	Democracy	Study
Send $ home	Learn English	Study English	Enough $	Eng.
Good job	Make money	Good job	Send $	Better life/

We had a great discussion about the similarities and differences in their responses. Someone then said that everybody in the United States had once been an immigrant. Some people disagreed and "teacher" was called to settle the matter. I explained how both sides were right in a way but if they wanted to learn more about it I could bring in more materials to study in class. Everyone agreed; someone suggested another movie. As an in-class writing exercise learners wrote a paragraph on why they had come to the U.S. using the lists generated during discussion. To facilitate grammar, I reviewed the past tenses of some verbs they might use.

We followed this content area for a few more classes which included viewing 30 minutes of a documentary produced for the Ellis Island Museum. An important thing to keep in mind when using videos as a way to generate content is that as the facilitator of this rather open-ended process, the teacher needs to remain tuned-in as to when learners have had enough. This can be tricky since in my experience there is always someone who wants to stay with a particular theme so just asking the class may not be enough. A good way to end the process in a definite way is to have an uninterrupted viewing of the entire film with popcorn and soda. It's also a good idea to invite people to bring in their favorite videos or to be prepared to talk about them - just make sure you allow for enough time to do this since everyone is going to want a chance to share. One time we ended up with a video of a Chinese beauty pageant and Terminator I dubbed in Spanish! The beauty pageant generated a lot of comments and I'm still intrigued about the possibilities it presented.

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SKITS, VIDEOS, AND CONFLICTS

Kathy Brucker

I try to make English classes as learner-centered as possible. Some of the themes that have been woven throughout all the places I've taught are to encourage students to bring in their own topics for discussion. I start out each cycle by asking students what they'd like to talk about in class. For example, I ask, "where do you need to use English right away" Then we practice role-plays that we come up with or I find in different books, read and practice dialogues, read and write about stories, and have discussions centering on these topics. Together we decide on class rules, break times, rules, trip times, and test times. I encourage discussions as much as possible around topics I hear people talking about before class, during break, and after class. I try to pursue or continue ideas they bring up or think out loud about. Since I have a homogeneous language class we are able to discuss ideals in their native language, then translate, and implement new grammar structures.

By the end of this particular cycle students were used to this pattern of class and weren't afraid to suggest new topics and discuss their own ideas. Beyond letters from their children's schools and welfare notes, though, they hadn't brought anything into class.

One day, people said that at the end of the their previous cycle they had done a short skit called "Fly Soup" with their teacher. This helped them to feel like they had learned in class and they wanted to do something like this again. They shared the skit with other students and we discussed whether they wanted to work on this one again as a class or try a different one. The summer students had really enjoyed "Fly Soup" and wanted to share it with the new students that semester. We played around with it, practicing and rehearsing it. They had a lot of fun with it.

My initial plan was to work on the language and the presentation of this skit and then perform and write a skit of our own. I brought this up but people didn't seem to understand what I was asking or had in mind. I shelved the idea thinking that the class wasn't ready to coordinate that much English.

We practiced first as a class. I read the lines and they repeated them. We pulled out the words that people had problems pronouncing. When I have three or four words that people have trouble with, I make up a little verse with the difficult words that they can practice in class and after class, if

they are inspired. An example of this is: "Pepper makes people sneeze, pepper makes people sneeze....." We worked on presentation together also. The summer group performed for the new students. Then we talked about why we put emphasis on different areas and how questions in English are implied by a rise in tone of voice. We broke into groups, practiced, and perfomed for one another. We had a good time with it, but that seemed to be the end of it.

The next week one of the tutors came to class. I asked if people would like to perform the play for the tutor. They enthusiastically agreed. We kept the same groups and perfomed it for the tutor. A couple of days later my supervisor came in and again I asked if they wanted to perfom the skit for him. After he gave his comments and left, one of the students said, "Why don't we write our own play?" I asked for other opinions about this suggestion. Of course, I was really excited that someone had thought of this and said it! I waited to give my opinion so that people wouldn't feel pressured into trying it. Some people were excited about this possibility of practicing all the skill areas while other people brought up points around their speaking and writing abilities in English. We debated these points and talked about the insecurities of not knowing enough English, having pronunciation problems which hinder communication, and the fact that it would be a lot of work to attempt to pull this together. Finally, they decided they wanted to try it. Our discussions were conducted in English and Spanish.

I asked if they wanted to split into small groups or do a large group drama. They talked about both and decided it would be easier to do a group play. We talked for quite a while about what the subject should be. At the beginning some people wanted to base it in a restaurant, like McDonald's and have there be a confrontation. They gave me character ideas which I wrote on the board along with ideas for the story line. We found that this was too simplistic because there weren't enough parts nor could they be filled out to make it meaningful.

There were a lot of suggestions for other topics. I wrote the topics that came up on the board for future voting. I listened mostly, although I did agree with them that the play must be something that all of us were having a problem with and could discuss so that everyone could have a part. From there they came up with a universal topic-- housing problems. When one woman protested that she didn't have any problems with housing another woman responded that she could give advice and share her good experiences with her apartment. I encouraged them to use English in their discussions to begin to develop the plot and characters. Again I wrote up

ideas which helped us to see the structure of the ideas and helped me to stay out of the discussion but still be there for moral support. I didn't feel a need to give direction at this point because we were just brainstorming.

They decided that one group should be those having problems, another group their neighbors and friends who could give advice because they had good housing. One person could be a a supervisor at Boston Housing Authority, a secretary, and a narrator. I was instructed to work with the group that spoke less English. We worked on developing parts and lines for each person. Later we worked on translation using the English that people were familiar with as well as a few new structures. The group that spoke more English worked without me to plan their parts. They came to me when they had problems with English structure or words and to practice acting out what they'd written.

We worked on this for a couple of days. Creating, translating, writing dialogues, planning the sequences, and trying to relate everything took quite a while. Of course, the natural hams came out quickly and made their parts really dramatic! Pronunciation seemed to improve considerably once people were able to put their own emotions into a familiar, frustrating situation.

During this time we were encountering and learning new vocabulary, new structures and, an important aspect of participatory approach: how to ask questions! I made worksheets for homework from the new language that students were encountering. This was good reinforcement for the new language structures and provided a balance for all of the group work we were doing.

A month earlier the second level group had come to our class to share some role plays they had created. I then started thinking that it would be fun to share our play with them. I wondered if people might be interested in an exchange. I suggested it and people thought it was a an idea we could work with.

When we started to practice and tried to make sure that the pieces fit some of the underlying personality conflicts came out strongly. Some students wanted the skit to end in one way while others favored a different ending. There were a couple of causes that the conflict may have stemmed from. It was the end of the cycle so we were not only tired, but some of these power struggles had been going on for a long time. I couldn't understand a lot of what was said, so I couldn't make many suggestions. I did try to intervene and figure out a compromise, but at that point it was too late.

Soon some students started to back out. They said that they didn't want to present it. Reasons ranged from my pronunciation isn't good enough, I don't want to read off paper, and there isn't enough time left to memorize my part and get it perfect.

Since it was the end of classes and everything was crazy, I didn't pursue finding one ending and trying to pull the skit together. I felt that students had gotten a lot of language of this activity, and many gained experience and confidence using English in confrontative situations. One woman who hadn't been too vocal in class was excellent in confronting the "supervisor" and imploring him to act on her behalf for decent housing.

Personality clashes in classes are a big issue and at that point in my teaching I didn't have the experience or the time needed to deal with this situation. Actually I don't know how well I do it now, a year later, besides doing group work and taking enough control over the class so that one or two people don't dominate.

I feel like the participatory approach is a very good model and an effective learning tool. It's hard sometimes to convince students that bringing in "real-life situations" is learning English. When people feel they have the power to change things and can use the language in "real-life" situations, *and* when people realize that they can use this English on the street and hear it from real people, they are very enthusiastic about learning. .

Video

One other method for feedback with dramas and dialogues involves using video. After we had decided to present the skit to the level two class, I had suggested that we videotape the play so that we could watch ourselves and work with it after we presented it. People were hesitant about this. I realize now that people were overwhelmed by this idea because we had never used the equipment in class.

The next cycle I brought the camera in quite often so we could get used to it. First, I taped myself in the classroom and we watched it. Then I taped a typical class doing a variety of different activities and we watched it. It's fun to see and watch our general interactions. Finally, I taped people doing dialogues and monologues and we watched and commented on those. I learn a lot about my own teaching style and class interactions, although I

hate watching myself. I feel like a video camera makes a big difference in the quality of activities and when we all do it together it's not so bad!

... " I have always insisted that words used in organizing a literacy program come from the word universe of the people who are learning, expressing their actual language, their anxieties, fears, demands, dreams. Words should be laden with the meaning of the people's existential experience, and not of the teacher's experience."[1] Paulo Freire

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HOPES, DREAMS AND MEMORIES
Making Meaning through Poetry and Stories

By Lee Hewitt

I teach a multicultural group of ESL adult learners in a community-based adult learning program. Many students share a common first language if not culture but some do not. I have found that learning about each others' particular cultures, countries; past journeys, present lives and future hopes and dreams can help create an environment of sharing and safety in the language classroom. Our hopes, dreams and memories make up a large part of who we are in the world, the choices we make and why we try to live the way that we do. In sharing these, the classroom becomes an environment of genuine human relationship and in that the students strive to communicate themselves to me - the teacher and especially to each other in the new language.

Of course in all this sharing, I am concerned about helping students see the ways that they are really learning the English language. Many of my students want dictations, grammar worksheets, verb lists and spelling rules; i.e., they want to see the language in isolation and they want to see concrete evidence of their progress. I don't think these expectations are unreasonable. However, I believe that adult learners are going to be more strongly motivated to continue the difficult task of learning a new language if they can use it to share themselves; to make sense of their experiences and in some instances to take action to change those experiences. When I do reading, writing and storytelling with students about issues important to them, I try to balance and intertwine this sharing work with the more traditional forms of language work that my students actively ask for. What I find happening in the classroom is that grammar work becomes subordinated to the making of meaning about one's experiences. These experiences are individual but in the sharing of them, they create bridges of recognition and understanding which contribute to a classroom in which adults are looking to explore their ideas and

experiences - in English!

MEMORIES
Writing a Group Poem

**** **** ****

Memories-Remembering Your Life

I remember when
I came to this school.
I remember when
I came the first day to the U.S.
I remember when
I started my new job.
I remember when
I received my first paycheck.

I remember my ex- boyfriend.
I remember when
I got my G.E.D.
I remember when
I ate my first sandwich here.
I remember when
my son was born.
I remember when
I had my first communion.
I remember when
I came to Boston.
I remember when
I saw snow for the first time - the snowstorm of 1978.
I remember when
I got married.
I remember when
my daughter was born.
I remember when
I graduated from the university.

I remember my 15th Birthday.

by Paulina C., Norma L., Parvin K., Lan Le, Carmen S., Luz B., Jing Yi Tan, Pedro P., Lee H., Blanca H., Luis P. Printed in Our Thoughts, Our Feelings, Ourselves a collection of student writings of the Adult Learning Program of the J.P.C.C.[2]

**** **** ***** ****

This is a group poem written by a low level intermediate ESL class. I was doing a weekly workshop with this class in which I had been

doing a lot of work with students on developing interactive reading strategies. These are strategies that involve building students' awareness of reading as a holistic activity that involves the interaction of their schema, i.e. prior knowledge and expectations with the material that they are reading. I was challenging them to look at reading as more than the task of "decoding." This actually builds on strengths that adult learners have. They have a large amount of schema; i.e., past experiences and knowledge to draw on to understand any new piece of information. I was also having them write a lot in response to reading.

In this class, we read the story, "Then and Now"[3] from Remembering which is a wonderful vehicle for talking about the past in a personal way but also in a social context. Near the end of the class in the spirit of remembering and to emphasize a sense of interaction with the short reading they had just done, I had the students write a group poem.

To begin, I stood at the board and wrote the same beginning line on the board: I remember when... for each person and then I invited each student to complete one line.[4] Upon completion, I read the whole poem aloud. Then we brainstormed about a title. This provided ways for students to reflect on the whole meaning of the piece they had just written together. This title was proposed by one of the students and agreed upon after we looked at all the titles proposed by the group.

This "title brainstorming" is a small tool to use to encourage interactive reading/writing skills because it calls on students to reflect on the whole piece of writing. In anticipation of reading a story, it also provides a tangible platform from which to share predictions concerning the story content. I often write the title of the story on the board before reading (as I did before our reading of "Then and Now") and invite students to brainstorm about the meaning of the title and their ideas about the story content.

The instant nature of this group poem was very appealing to the students. Within 15 minutes the whole class had written a nice poem together. Also the students had been struggling with the past tense; the many irregularities were confusing and uncertainty underlay their sense of when to use it. This poem became a vehicle to work on the language skills of the "past tense" as well as to create an environment of sharing among the students. For the students who were clearly attached to grammar exercises, this was a creative way to link their needs for overt grammar work with the making of meaning in English.

I have found that focusing on grammar makes many students happy but does not help them integrate the new knowledge into their control of the language. In fact, just this week one of the students in my

class observed how easy a particular grammar-based language game was. However, she went on exclaiming in frustration how different it was when it came down to really knowing when to use it correctly when she was "really" talking. Indeed as teachers, we need to strive to find ways to allow our students to "really" talk in the classroom, that is to MAKE MEANING WITH THE LANGUAGE. As Polly Ulichny, one of my professors, used to say, "Grammar has no meaning in and of itself - it only has meaning in how we use it to in fact make meaning!"

At the end of class before everyone went off in their separate directions, I invited each student to read their contribution in sequence. I enjoyed the weaving together of the different students' voices to create this whole. The students felt a sense of accomplishment in their poem expressed through a collective smile at the end of the class.

Discovering Possibilities

When I did this poem with the students, I felt positive about the process. The students enjoyed it and were actively engaged in sharing in English. At the time, I had ideas about ways to do follow up work with this poem in the following class; but, what happened actually taught me a lot about the power of this kind of group poetry and storytelling.

Before the next class, I typed up the poem to distribute to all the students. I also made a cloze exercise of the poem deleting all the verbs. I planned to do this with the students in the class to highlight grammar work on the past tense verbs.

Some students had not been in the previous class when we had written the poem. Therefore to begin the class, I asked one of these previously absent students to read the poem aloud. As she read each contribution, I saw nods of recognition amongst the other students and several times, chuckles of amusement. Several times, almost in chorus, other students chimed..."I remember that too." The students' responses encouraged me to go with the flow. In fact their poem became a platform from which students acknowledged familiar shared experiences and provided opportunities to share more information about their own cultural and religious traditions. For example, the Chinese woman didn't understand "first communion." Several students explained the significance of it and then shared their own experiences and that of their children. There was a sigh of wistfulness amongst many of the Latina women as they explained the significance of the 15th Birthday celebration, called "La Fiesta Rosa" in some Latin countries. The poem led the Chinese student to share the experiences of her family in China during the Cultural Revolution.

The poem also brought the students together here to the U.S. in its memories of the "first paycheck," "the snowstorm," "a new job," and "arriving in Boston." The poem, although sparse in its content, was rich in the oral response that it evoked amongst students.

I had been doing a lot of writing and reading with this group. This class marked a turning point because the students started to really become the "story-tellers." One student, in response to the poem, enthusiastically related the story of her first English lesson-in the past tense! It was a story about her first days on her first job here when she had no English and how she learned words like "coffee" and "doughnut" from a co-worker so she could buy a snack at break. The other students found themselves laughing with her.
I found that this kind of literacy work in the classroom encouraged students to express themselves more freely in English and also built their confidence as writers of English. As Jing Yi Tan, a student, said: "Before I don't like to write because I was scared making mistakes, but the teacher give us good confidence. She says she really like my story. I hate to write before but now it is interesting."[5]

FOLLOW UP LANGUAGE WORK

* I have since done this poem with other groups in conjunction with other reading work about our pasts. I have asked students to write their own poem using the same format. This allows students to approach the poem and use the level of language that they have. I have found that the sharing of these individual poems creates the same kind of excitement and recognition among the students as described above. With Sakhon's permission, I would like to share with you his poem.

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WAVE LIFE

by Sakhon Ou

I remember when I was young, I always swam with my friends in the river near my land on the weekends.
I remember when I went to primary school, I got punished by the teachers a lot.
I remember when I stayed with the monks in the temple, the monks always brought me with them to pray at other people's houses.
I remember when I was a teenager, I went to dance at the New Year's celebration and I met a lot of beautiful women.
I remember when I was a policeman in Cambodia, I had a lot of women following me and they asked me to get married with them.
I remember when I was under the communist regime, they forces me to work hard and they gave me only a little food to eat and they wanted to kill me.

I remember when I was in Gallang camp in Indonesia, I was a farmer. I planted many kinds of vegetables and I made a lot of money.
I remember when I came to America, my family and I never flew before and when we got up on the plane, we were very nervous and my daughter threw-up on her mother.

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* Students can be encouraged to write a short story about one line in their poem. Also doing this creative work in conjunction with the building of the emotions vocabulary creates an interesting combination. With Maria's permission, I would like to share her poem.

**** ***** ****

MY MEMORIES
by Maria Cruz

I remember when I came to the United States. I was wearing fake eyelashes. I was crying so much the eyelashes fell off my eyes. I was embarrassed.
I remember when my family introduced me to Jose. I was happy.
I remember when it was my wedding anniversary. I was happy.
I remember when Apollo came to my house as a little puppy. I was worried because my husband didn't like dogs in the house.
I remember when I got my driver's license. I was happy.
I remember when my son sometimes came home late. I was worried.
I remember when the doctor told me, "You are pregnant." I was happy.
I remember when I got my permanent job. I was happy.

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REFLECTIONS

For me as a teacher, this work with student written poetry reaffirmed my belief in the great value of using student produced writing as vital classroom material. As a tool for language teaching, literacy work, grammar work, and oral practice student stories are invaluable. However, their stories tell us much more than their particular grammar or language issues at that moment. Adults have many stories to tell: stories that sing with life's emotions, stories that teach, stories that explain - stories that need caring listeners. In fact, the more I teach the more I believe one of our vital roles as teachers is to be just that: active, caring listeners! Student stories have value as statements of personal experience as well as reflections of how immigrants/ refugees experience US society.

STORIES AND MUSIC

Bringing our culture, our pride, our music and our joy to the classroom!

STORIES

I just recently started an oral history sharing project with my class similar to the one suggested by Ann Cason in Talking Shop.[6] The language work is so rich and the sharing is wonderful.

To begin, I brought in a Matrushka Doll that my mother has given me. It is particularly beautiful and it is indeed a special object to me. I showed it to the class and only explained that it is very special to me and I wanted them to find out about it by asking questions. The game like nature - along the lines of a treasure hunt - of this exercise helped to stimulate student involvement. More importantly, as in any human relationship of "knowing", I think the students were genuinely curious about finding out more about me beyond my identity as teacher. I know I am always interested in finding out more about them.

LANGUAGE WORK

As students asked questions, I wrote them on the board and then answered them. My answers many times led to other questions and out of their questions, the story of my special doll and a piece of my life evolved. As a follow up activity, I wrote up the story that had evolved from their questions and that became the reading for the next day. After reading the story the following day, I asked the students to recall/figure out the questions that the story answered. This sharing process provided a great deal of opportunities for the students to work on the question syntax in English and to improve their mastery over that elusive "do-support" construct in English. Also it helped students in distinguishing the differences in meaning of all the WH- question words. There was a lot of vocabulary building and the learning of such important structures as "It reminds me of..." and "It looks like...."

I then asked the students to bring in something special to them. Following is an example of the questions that the class asked about one student's special object, "La Muneca Sin Rostro" (The Doll Without a Face) and the story we wrote using the Language Experience Approach afterwards.[7]

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Questions about Luz's Object

1. Where did you get the doll?
2. Did you buy it or did someone give it to you?
3. What kind of material is it made of?
4. Where did the doll come from?
5. When did your mother give you the doll?
6. Where do you keep the doll?
7. Why doesn't the doll have a face?
8. How much did your mother pay for it?
9. Why is the doll traditional?
10. Is the doll an Indian?
11. Why does she have a rose in her hand?
12. Is the doll made by hand or by machine?
13. Do people make the dolls in factories?
14. Do you like the doll? Why?
15. How long have you had the doll?
16. Can you buy this doll in Boston?
17. Does the doll have a name?
18. Why does the doll wear a hat?
19. Do all the dolls look like this?
20. Who makes the dolls in your country?

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LUZ'S DOLL

The doll' name is "La Muneca Sin Rostro" - the doll without a face. It comes from the Dominican Republic. These kind of dolls are made only in the Dominican Republic. The doll is made by hand. It is made of clay. The doll looks like a Haitian woman and she looks like she is dancing. The doll has a rose in her hand because it is a tradition in Haiti. The doll always wears a hat because it represents that the country is very hot. The doll isn't made by machine. In the past, the poor people made the dolls. Now the dolls are made in a factory.
Luz likes the doll because her mother gave it to her and it reminds her of her country. Her mother gave it to her two years ago. Luz keeps the doll in her living room on top of the T.V.

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I wrote these questions and this story up on poster board and displayed them in the classroom. (I frequently display group stories in the classroom on large poster boards. I believe it contributes to creating an "environment of literacy" that the students enthusiastically respond to.) Also while we were doing this project, we did some very focused grammar work on questions in the past tense and review work on simple yes/no questions. This grammar work was reflected neatly in this oral history project which created a vital context for this language work.

As time went by, students brought in such varied objects as: a handmade sweater, a belt handmade by a relative from the coins of her country, a ceramic plate bought by a friend on a return trip home as a gift and a delicious Magdalena cake made by a student's wife that was then eaten by the class. Out of this sharing, students learned a great deal about the English language as well as about the cultures and experiences of the people who share their classroom; and in that, share in their struggles and joys in learning this new language.

MUSIC

I had a ritual this summer in my classroom that helped to liven up those low-energy, heat-laden evenings. I asked my students to bring in some music that they would really like to share with the other students. I made sure that I played a piece of music every night and at the end of class I asked someone else if they wanted to volunteer to bring music the following night. I emphasized the ritual nature of this project because without this I have found that it is easy to lose sight of this kind of sharing or have it absorbed by some other class activity as the time sweeps by. Also as a ritual, the students can take more control of it as it becomes something that they grow to expect and look forward to.

I had used English lyric songs in the class for fun, language work and as catalysts for class discussions. I feel strongly that music has a vital role to play in the language classroom. In this ritual, I only asked that the students bring in some music that they loved. The students brought in music which varied from revolutionary music from Ethiopia, to the merengue sounds of Juan Luis Guerra to the romantic music of Brazilian singer Milton Nascimento to come traditional Chinese music.

Each night in the last half of class, I played a piece of music. Sometimes the student explained the story of the song and told us about the musician. The Ethiopia student taught the class the refrain of her song that essentially translated to "peace and happiness." She also told the story of her journey from war-torn Ethiopia to the U.S.: a story that captured our attention. (This was an especially moving story because her personal story was being reflected in the news at that time as the fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea was ending. She talked about the spirited parties that her people were having as a results of the impending peace.)

When a student had less control of the language, I structured the interchange by asking such questions as: What is the name of the singer? Is the singer popular? Why do you like this music? Do people dance to this music? How do they dance? This last question in some questions resulted in a demonstration. Also we listened to the music and responded to the sounds using such English phrases as: "It makes me feel..." or " It reminds me of...". In response to the Brazilian singer, we had an interesting discussion on the

similarities between the Portuguese and Spanish languages.

Music became part of our classroom and I saw very clearly what a vital role music plays in people's lives. (Doesn't it in yours?) What was particularly wonderful was that at the end of the summer party one of the students, who had shared with us during our music journeys that he could play the guitar, brought it to the party and played and sang some wonderful music. Needless to say, the spirit of that party was lively and exuberant!

As Elsa Auerbach writes in Making Meaning, Making Change:
"This process of sharing our stories becomes a validation of the past, a way of reconciling the old with and the new: by telling their stories in English class, their cultures become a bridge to the new language."[8]

Indeed, our music is one of our stories and like the "objects" shared in the oral history project provides rich opportunities for learners to cross the bridge to English with joy and pride.

HOPES AND DREAMS

One important aspect of the Participatory Approach is student goals. What are student goals and how can the ESL teacher facilitate the reaching of those goals? These goals can be personal, social, academic or employment related goals. One piece of reading and writing that I do with students early on in any cycle involves an exploration of students' hopes and dreams. A story that I have used as a catalyst is "Ana's Dream" by Lenore Balliro which can be found in a compilation of writings by the UMass Family Literacy Project called Looking Forward, Looking Back: Writings From Many Worlds.[9]

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ANA'S DREAM

In my country, I was a teacher. I loved my work. I prepared lessons. We read books and discussed them in class. I went to college to learn how to teach. But in the U.S., I work as a factory worker. My college degree can't help me, because my English is not very good. Now I try to study more English. My dream is to be a teacher again in this country.

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Reading: A Way In

Before we read the story, I have students brainstorm about the title. This generates a wealth of language work. I ask the students: "What is a dream?" Inevitably, students talk about the dreams they have when they are sleeping. Other students identify

dreams as what someone wants to do in the future. I then ask them which dream the story is about. Often they guess it is about future goals. If students are not familiar with the word goals it becomes a good opportunity to explain it and explore it in the context of their own lives. Continuing with the title, I ask them who the dream belongs to. "Ana," they reply. I ask them how they know that and some knowingly identify the possessive apostrophe and others are confused. This becomes an opportune moment to do a mini-lesson on this point.

We then proceed to read the story silently for comprehension and then aloud for pronunciation. I created a set of comprehension questions for this particular reading that explores the students' understanding of the story and helps them relate it to their own experiences. For example, one question is, What is Ana determined to do? This question usually involves vocabulary building (determined) and offers students a strong word with which to express their own goals. The last questions lead into the student's experiences. The questions are, What are you determined to do? What are your dreams?

"Ana's Dream" is a very short and simple story but it is an example of what simplicity can really teach us and our students. The language work and the sharing that develops from this reading can be quite involved and uncovers important issues for students and teachers alike.

Writing : A Way to Explore

After reading the story, I ask the students to write about their own dreams. However, first I have them "tell" their stories to the group or to each other. Depending on the fluency level, I may or may not structure the interchange with such questions as: What did you do in your country? Did you like your work? Why? What are you doing in the U.S.? Do you like it? What do you want to do in the future? These questions help students to talk about their lives across time. They are challenged grammatically to explain themselves in different tenses.

This pre-writing discussion is invaluable. Over time I have learned to integrate "talking before writing" and I have found that the language work is richer as interactions amongst the students stimulate ideas and vocabulary. Stories also become truer to the person and less a model of "Ana's Dream."

I have mainly used this story with classes of women students. I find that for many of them it offers a much needed opportunity to reflect on what they did in their countries in and outside the home and on what they can do here. Their sense of self is challenged I believe by the changing expectations brought on by immigration to the U.S. and the lives that they find here for themselves and their families.

Ying Mo's story was written after some discussion.

YING'S DREAM
by Ying Mo

I was a candy factory maker in my country. My job was packing up candy. I liked my job because I made enough to support myself. Also my co-workers were friendly and helpful. We talked about our dream and our lives during the breaktime. After I came to the United States, I was confused. I don't know what I can do because I can't speak English well and I can't read and write much English. So now I study very hard to learn English. After I finish school I want to be a dressmaker or a secretary. I hope my dream comes true and soon.

The discussions stimulated by these stories involve a lot of talk about work histories, shared job problems in the U.S. and a look at the obstacles that prevent people from getting where they want. It is also a way for people to share their resources and resourcefulness. Students talk about their choices and the times when they had no choice. Some of the stories are difficult because students tell of feelings of discrimination and feelings of powerlessness on jobs where they felt trapped because of limited English skills. These issues can become the content of future classes. Readings and discussions about discrimination and the laws in the U.S. are very important and the knowledge of their rights and recourses can be empowering to students.[10]

Moving On

In these discussions, students are often speaking from a point of strength because their English is improving and they are looking ahead. In fact, I believe in hopes and dreams as powerful motivators especially for adult learners. The ESL classroom can be a place to plan those dreams, fantasize those possibilities and think critically about experiences and expectations.

As the teacher, I learn a great deal from these discussions and stories. It helps to see what is important for the students and to see a little more clearly what they themselves see as their goals. I gain an expanded view of the people in my classroom; a viewpoint that helps me to teach more in tune with the students' experiences and expectations.

References and Resources

1. Freire, Paulo and Macedo, Donaldo: Literacy- Reading the Word and the World (Bergin and garvey Pub., 1987)

2. Our school publishes student writings once a year. With more time and funds I would like to see us print stories more often. It encourages "writing for real purposes" and offers students a concrete way to share their stories beyond their own classroom. To encourage student writing, I often use stories from other adult learning programs and from Voices a publication of adult learner writings from Canada. I always explain to the students the source of the stories they are reading.

3. DeRosa, Grace, "Then and Now". Remembering New Reader's Press.

4. For more creative ideas on writing poetry in the classroom see Wishes, Lies and Dreams- Teaching Children to Write Poetry by Kenneth Koch.

5. I believe that Jing's response is related in part to the way that I tried to respond to student writings. I always responded to the CONTENT of what they wrote and asked questions about it. I made comments about the grammar errors. I tried to respond to "errors not as mistakes but as evidence of learning" ! For more insights, read " Responding to Student Writing " by Vivian Zamel in the TESOL Quarterly Vol. 19 Another good reference is Composing in a Second Language edited by Sandra McKay from Newbury House Publishers 1984.

6. Cason, Ann, "Oral Histories: Learning From Each Other's Lives" in Talking Shop: (Boston: UMass, 1990)

7. For more information on the Language Experience approach see Using Language Experience Approach with Adults by Katherine Kennedy and Stephanie Roeder and Making Meaning, Making Change by Elsa Auerbach, pages 166-168. Also in the book Teacher, Sylvia Ashton Warner demonstrates through her development of the organic vocabulary what I see as the basis for the power behind LEA.

8. Auerbach, Elsa, Making Meaning, Making Change: (Boston: University of Massachusetts, 1990)

9. Looking Forward, Looking Back: Writings from Many Worlds: (UMass Family Literacy Project, Boston MA, 1989)

10. A good reference for material on this subject is a Curriculum Packet about Immigration-Related Job Discrimination by Andrea Nash and Peggy Wright from the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, Boston MA, 1991. Also It's Your Right from the Choices series of Contemporary Books,1992 pages 61-66 has a dialogue, short readings and information about the IRCA legislation and the history of civil rights laws in the USA. I have used this material successfully with an intermediate ESL class.

USING EVALUATION TOOLS AS CODES

Kathy Brucker

An English Class

Jose:	We speak too much Spanish.
Felipe:	We don't speak enough Spanish.
Kathy (the teacher):	I don't like to tell people, Be quiet. Listen. Pay attention.
Jorge:	I don't like to have conversations in Spanish about our opinions and problems. I only like to discuss them in English.
Susana:	I can't speak enough English to only speak English. I don't know English but I want to talk. I'm part of this class and I need to use Spanish to explain to you what I don't understand. I can't learn from an English only class.
Kathy:	What's your opinion?

********** ********** *******

This is an example of a code I developed from student class evaluations in a level one class of Spanish-speaking adults. I developed the codes as a way for the class to express their opinions about class content and dialogue during the cycle. (The article explaining the development of this evaluation process is included in *Challenges in Assessments*, published by SABES, Spring 1992.)

After I had read the second set of evaluations and had limited conversations with people I realized that there was discontent with the amount of Spanish and English being spoken in the class. There was friction between students regarding shyness to speak English, ask questions and the ease with which people slid into Spanish.

I brought this code to class and started by saying, "In classes where students speak the same language sometimes there are problems between the students. There are problems because some students speak a lot of English and some other students can't speak much English. People get mad at each other because they want to speak more Spanish or English in class. I read the evaluations yesterday and now I think we have this problem because people have different opinions about this. I wrote a paper with different people's opinions on it from this class. I want you to get into

groups of three or four, read the opinions, and talk about them. What is your opinion? Are these problems in this classroom? How can we make people feel happy in this class?" Everybody looked a little overwhelmed and mystified. I said, "I believe that this is your classroom. I think we need to discuss this and then agree on what you want to happen in class." People translated that, everyone nodded, and we started reading. I had students take turns reading each quote and explaining them to one another.

I had actually written these questions on paper for each group to use as a guide. When students had broken into groups I gave them the questions. I had them translate for each other in their groups. After I gave each group the set of questions I told them to discuss them then write each other's answers on newsprint. Examples of the questions are:

- Do you think we speak too much English in this class?
- Do you think we speak too much Spanish in this class?
- If you think there is too much Spanish in the class try to think of one way
  you can stop yourself from using Spanish in class.
- Try to think of one way you can help other people from using Spanish during class.
- If you think there is too much English in the class try to think of one way we help you to understand what's happening.

The questions were taken and talked about eagerly in all the groups but one. In this particular group both people who had chosen each other were poor writers. This is the problem when I don't assign people to groups. Because each of the members were poor writers none of them wanted to write nor were they satisfied with each other's writing styles! Finally, I had them tape each other's answers and I transcribed the answers for them to practice copying. I had them practice writing the answers they had given. They were familiar with the words (since they had said them).

Before the break we started a discussion on how students could help one another by being quiet and listening to one another or me. Some of the more vocal ones talked about how they wanted more English and less Spanish.

After the break I asked the secretary's assistant to come in and help translate what I had planned next. I asked them to share the answers they had come up with in their groups. Again, the vocal people said they wanted the whole class in English. No one else said anything. I said (to one of the less vocal students), "Angela, how do you feel about this?' She

said (in Spanish), "Well, I can try but I don't know enough English to always speak it." Other people said, "Well, try to answer in English. Don't speak if you don't know the English." I said, "Wait, is that fair? You're asking Angela and other people who don't know a lot of English to come to school and listen to you speak English. Think about how you're learning English. Don't you need to speak English to learn it?"

I asked Judith to translate that. We then had a great conversation! People discussed the issue with each other and through Judith with me. We finally decided that some Spanish would have to be used but it could be translated by people who knew more English.

An issue came up that I wasn't aware of. Apparently it was common for one person to ask a question and three people to give three different answers and no one ever questioned me for clarification. It was decided that one person would answer the question and then we could discuss it if the answer was wrong or needed more clarification. Group work was talked about which everyone, except one man, said they learn a lot from. The discussion was fruitful and carried by them. When I was asked, I gave my opinion. One man gave a beautiful speech about how they are all in such a rush to learn this language that they forget how long it takes a child to learn a language. He also expounded on the fact that many of them didn't know their first language well so it makes it doubly hard to learn another language. People listened and agreed with him.

Collectively we came up with the following rules regarding English and Spanish use in the classroom.

1. Speak Spanish less. Speak English more.
2. Speak English to Kathy.
3. Kathy speak English slower.
4. If someone has a question, they need to ask Kathy in English. If a student cannot ask the question in English, they need to say the question to another person, in Spanish. The other person will translate, in English, the question for Kathy.
5. If someone has a question, they need to try to ask in English. If a student cannot ask the question in English they need to say the question to another person, in Spanish. The other person can help translate, in English, and one person can try to answer.
6. More vocabulary and pronunciation.

The following Monday I started the class by first reviewing what had happened in the previous class for people who were absent and to refresh

memories. We talked about the new rules, the reasons for them, and made sure that everyone understood them.

To start the class, I gave them back their newsprint which they written the answers on from the questions I'd given them the previous Friday. I had picked out two or three awkward grammar areas they had trouble in when they were writing. Each group worked by themselves to correct the errors I circled. I circulated among the groups to give help where it was needed. They talked about these areas in small groups, made corrections, and practiced the correct structures.

If I did this again, I would let them pick out the grammar areas they felt they had trouble with. I would then explain the structures to each group from their questions.

Pictures of Situations/Emotions

Since people were expressing different emotions about the class, I thought that this would be a good time to expand our emotion vocabulary. I felt like this was a good place to start expressing emotions in English. Most people could not use English in the way that they wanted at that point. I wanted to emphasize that learning is difficult and frustration and anger are common feelings among any type of students.

An example of a worksheet which combines classroom situations with emotions follows. I based this on the ideals in *ESL in the Workplace* by Elsa Auerbach. I drew faces which expressed the emotion I sought to portray in words next to each example so that people would have a mental image to combine with the new vocabulary. I gave examples so they'd get the idea and not rely on translations.

****

Name_____
Can you write in the correct word?

confused homesick worried bored scared/afraid
interested angry impatient frustrated

1. My teacher talks to fast. I don't understand her.
   She feels _____.

2. I'm not learning fast enough. It will take too long to learn.

He feels _____.

3. We have to read and write too much. I can't read and write in English.
He feels _____.

4. My class is too easy. I'm not learning anything new.
She feels _____.

5. I can't listen. I can't pay attention. I'm thinking about my family in Puerto
Rico all the time.
She feels _____.

6. My husband doesn't want me to learn English. He is afraid I will be too independent.
She feels _____.

****

We took turns reading the sentences and telling what emotion the picture represented and how people felt in that situation. People practiced making sentences with the new words. They knew some of the words from previous class and life experiences. We worked on pronunciation using little chants I made up and repetition.

Some were frustrated at first that there was no right answer but then, after discussion about life and feelings, accepted the fact that our opinions could be the correct answer. The women were very interested in and answered with feeling, questions five and six.

Then I handed out a worksheet in which they could apply the emotions to themselves and their own situations. Some had a hard time writing and saying what they meant but they tried in pairs for the last half hour of class. They asked to finish the next day (not for homework) because they enjoyed first discussing as a group, then writing. (See A. Nash, "Expressing Feelings: Teaching a True Survival Skill" in *Talking Shop: A Curriculum Sourcebook for Participatory Adult ESL*, 1989.)

The following is an example of the feeling worksheet which people could apply to themselves.
1. In English class I usually feel _____.

2. When the teacher talks too fast, I feel _____.

3. When there's too much Spanish in class, I feel_____.

4. When I speak English on the street, I feel _____.

Reflections

I enjoyed doing this exercise with students. It seemed to pull together the reason for doing evaluations at various times throughout the cycle. It represented stated and unstated problems in the classroom which were causing tensions. The process made the classroom feel like a safe place that we all owned together and set the agenda in. We were able to work with new language such as "I think," "I feel" and learned new verbs in different tenses. We were able to translate common phrases students were using and practice them in English.

Group work was talked about and the value of it was expressed. We were able to express our opinions and feelings. They were heard, respected, and talked about, which is valuable in any setting. The use of second language in the ESL classroom, although controversial, I think is really important. To me it shows that each language is valuable and what students have to say is valuable in all situations. In my experience students open up when they know they are able to express themselves in either language and I or someone in the class will understand. Again, in my experience, I know that when the mind is open, the fastest and easiest learning takes place.

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